

Session 6

Tequila and Mezcal

Raw material



Agave

many species used

- blue agave

Agave tequilana Weber (var. azul)

- agave *espadín*

Agave angustifolia Haw (var. espadín)



Conversion

fructans + heat → sugar

Agave spirits basics

processing the raw material: harvesting



Agave spirit basics

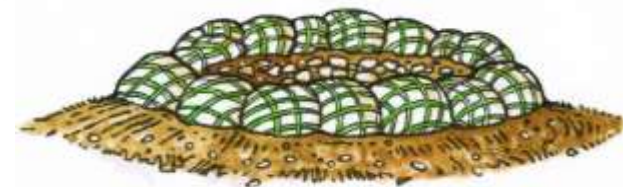
processing the raw material: cook & crush



whole *piñas*



halved/quartered



cook

- brick steam oven
- pressurised steam oven
- roasting pit

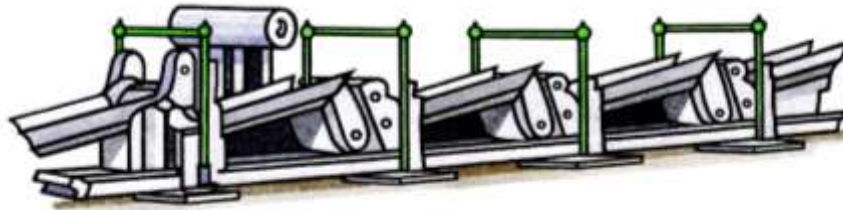
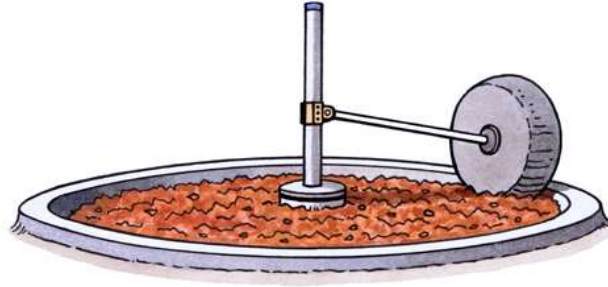


crush

Agave spirit basics

processing the raw material: cook & crush

cooked
piñas



→ agave fibres

→ sugary liquid

crush (mix with water)

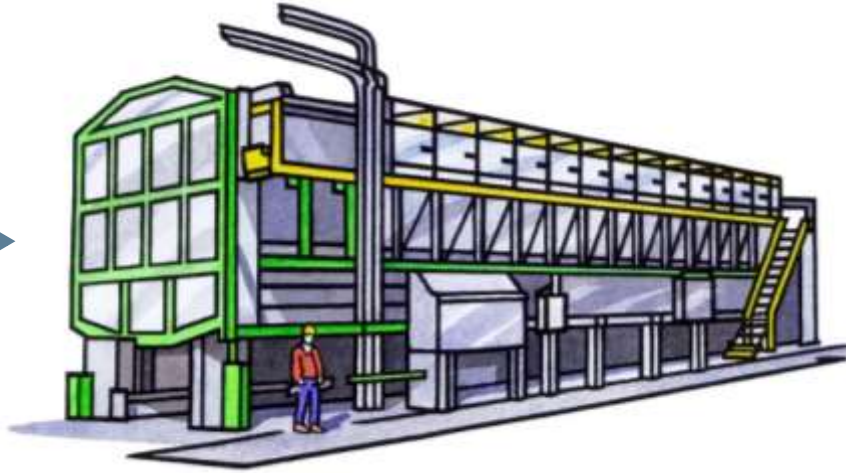
- by hand
- *tahona*
- milling machines

Agave spirit basics

processing the raw material: diffuser

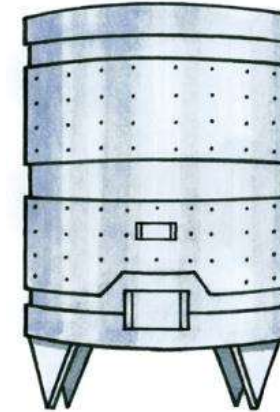


harvested *piñas*



diffuser

- whole *piñas* go in
- fructan-rich liquid comes out

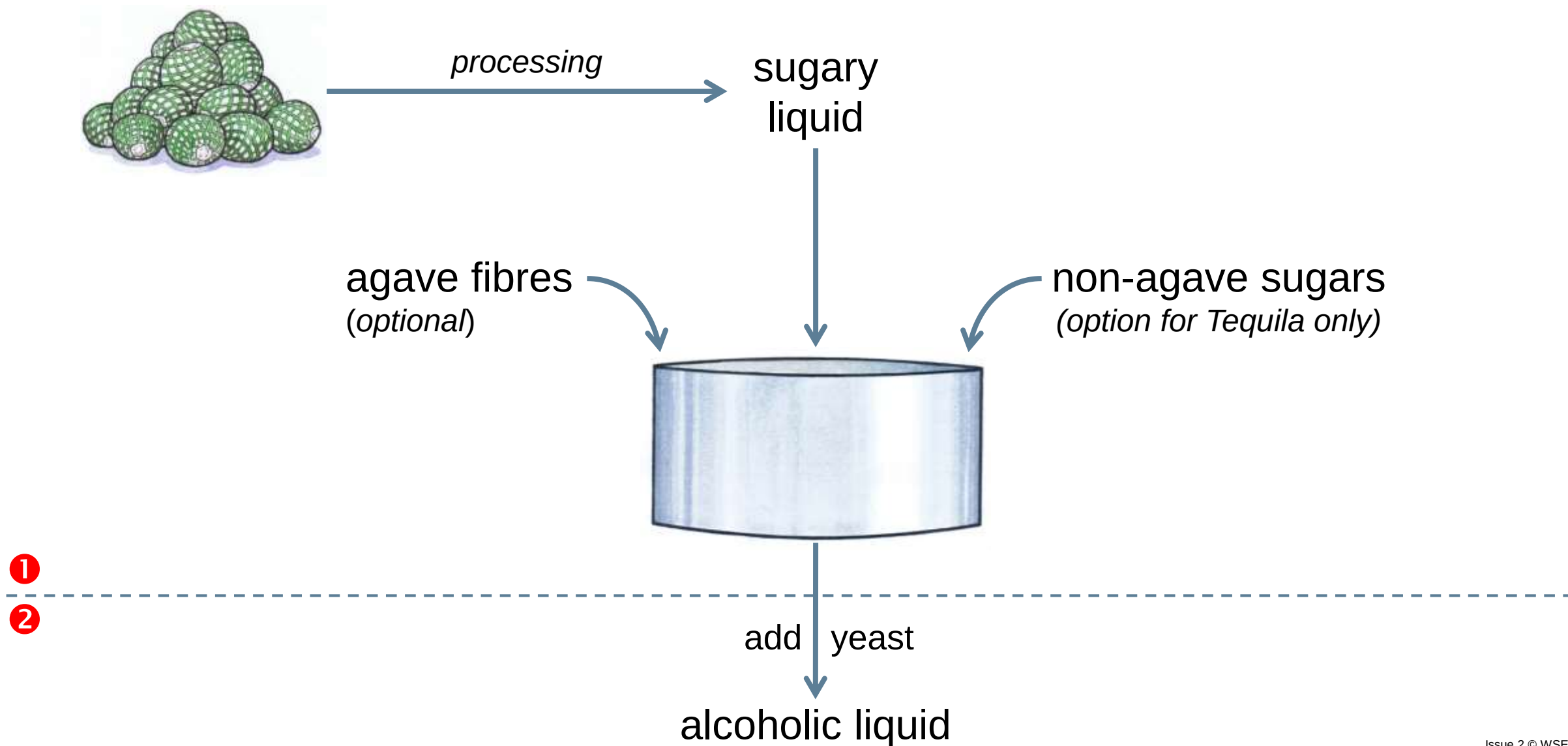


cook

sugary
liquid

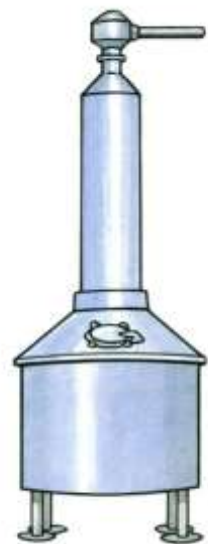
Agave spirit basics

formulation and fermentation



Agave spirit basics

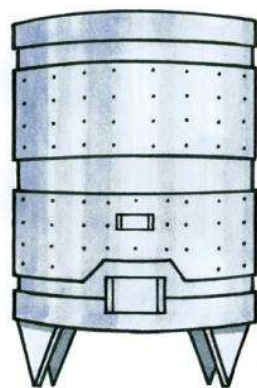
distillation and post-distillation



pot stills *or*
column stills



3 4



inert vessels *or*
large oak vessels *or*
oak barrels



abocante
(optional for
Tequila)

blending
and dilution
(typical)

other
additives
(optional)



agave spirit



Tequila



Agave

- must be grown in specific area
- blue agave
 - highland area, Tequila Valley
- typically steamed

Fermentation

- minimum 51% of sugar must come from blue agave
- agave fibres

Tequila



Distillation

- pot or column stills
 - best distilled in pots to a low strength

Maturation, storage

- inert vessels
- large old oak vessels
- old oak barrels

Finishing

- *abocante*

Tequila labelling terms

Categories

- Tequila
- Tequila 100% agave

Classes

- *blanco, plata, silver* (no min. ageing)
- *joven, oro, gold* (no min. ageing)
- *reposado* (min. 2 months in oak)
- *añejo* (min. 1 year in oak barrels)
- *extra añejo* (min. 3 years in oak barrels)





Agave

- must be grown in specific area
- any species of agave
- *Agave espadín*
- roasting
 - common in Oaxaca

Fermentation

- 100% agave only
- agave fibres

Mezcal



Distillation

- pot or column stills
 - best distilled in pots to a low strength

Storage

- typically inert vessels

Mezcal labelling terms

Categories

- **Mezcal**
all options available
- **Artesanal Mezcal**
roasting pits or brick ovens
hand crushing, *tahona*, simple milling machinery
directly heated cooper, wood or clay pot stills
- **Ancestral Mezcal**
roasting pits only
hand crushing and *tahona* only
directly heated wood or clay pot stills



Mezcal labelling terms

Classes

- *joven, blanco* (unaged)
- *reposado* (min. 2 months in oak)
- *añejo* (min. 1 year in oak barrels)



APPEARANCE		
Clarity		clear – hazy
Intensity		water-white – pale – medium – deep – opaque
Colour		colourless – lemon – gold – amber – brown
		pink – red – orange – yellow – green – blue – purple – brown – black
Other observations		e.g. louching
NOSE		
Condition		clean – unclean
Intensity		neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Aroma characteristics		e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation
PALATE		
Sweetness (sugar level)		dry – off-dry – medium – sweet
Texture		e.g. rough, smooth, watery, mouthfilling, warming
Flavour intensity		neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Flavour characteristics		e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation
Finish	length	short – medium – long
	nature	neutral – simple – some complexity – very complex
CONCLUSIONS		
Quality level		faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding